Annual report from the Council to the European Parliament on the common foreign and security policy

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The European Parliament adopted by 511 votes to 73 with 78 abstentions a resolution on the Annual Report from the Council to the European Parliament on the Common Foreign and Security Policy.

Assessment of the report: Members felt that the Council‘s Annual Report falls short of the ambitions of the Lisbon Treaty in important ways, which include: **(i) not giving a clear sense of medium and longer term priorities or strategic guidelines for the CFSP**; (ii) not clarifying the policy mechanisms for ensuring coherence and consistency among the different components of foreign policy, including those under the responsibility of the Commission; (iii) not addressing important questions on the role of the EEAS and the Delegations in ensuring that the Union‘s resources (personnel, financial and diplomatic) are aligned with its foreign affairs priorities; (iv) avoiding a discussion, the holding of which is implied in the new strategies for the Horn of Africa and the Sahel, on how to embed ad hoc Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations (their rationale and end-state) in the political-strategic framework of EU foreign policy priorities for a country or region.

Members further consider that, with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, improvements could be made on informing the competent committee on the outcome of Foreign Affairs Councils as well as in **consulting Parliament**, especially before deciding to **mandate the Commission** to negotiate and sign agreements on behalf of the Union and when it comes to **frameworks for the participation of third countries in EU crisis management operations**. They call on the Council, when drawing up future Annual CFSP Reports, to discuss with the Committee on Foreign Affairs the broad policy framework for the coming year, and the longer-term strategic objectives.

A new comprehensive approach to the EU’s foreign policy: Members point out that in the second decade of the twenty-first century there is a growing awareness amongst Europe‘s citizens that only comprehensive approaches that integrate diplomatic, economic, development and – in the last resort – military means are adequate for addressing global threats and challenges.

With the Lisbon Treaty the EU has all the means necessary to adopt a comprehensive approach, whereby all the Union‘s diplomatic and financial resources are used to back common strategic policy guidelines in order to have the greatest possible leverage in promoting the security and economic prosperity of European citizens and their neighbours. A comprehensive understanding of CFSP covers all areas of foreign policy, including the progressive framing of a Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) that might lead to a common defence. Members stress the need, also, to update the European Security Strategy in accordance with the current international environment.

The foreign policy architecture: Members underline the role of political leadership expected of the VP /HR in ensuring the unity, coordination, consistency, credibility and effectiveness of action by the Union.

They call on her to use to the full and in a timely manner her powers to initiate, conduct and **ensure compliance with the CFSP, involving Parliament‘s relevant bodies fully in that endeavour**. They welcome the important lead role, on behalf of the international community, played under difficult circumstances by the VP/HR in the negotiations with Iran, taking into account the important historical relationship between European and Iranian peoples. Parliament calls for leadership in enhancing the

Union's role in support of the European Neighbourhood, in light of the Arab Spring, particularly the democratic transition processes in the Southern Mediterranean, including through the new European Endowment for Democracy, as well as in the stalled Middle East peace process.

Members recognise the essential role of the EEAS and affirm their intention to continue monitoring the geographic and gender balance of staff in the EEAS, and to assess whether the appointment of Member State diplomats as Heads of Delegation and other key positions is in the interests of the Union, not solely of their Member States. The report calls for **improved reporting and access to political reports from Delegations and EUSRs** in order for Parliament to receive full and timely information on developments from the ground.

They stress that the **scrutiny of EU foreign policy, exercised by the European Parliament** and national parliaments at their respective levels, is essential if European external action is to be understood and supported by EU citizens.

Members regret that on many occasions the **bilateral relations of some Member States with third countries still overshadow or undermine the consistency of EU action**, and they call for more effort by Member States to align their external policies with the CFSP.

Lastly, the VP/HR, is asked to explore the production of guidelines for the systematic consignment of specific tasks and missions to a coalition of the willing, such as a 'core group' of EU states, as well as to start the process that will lead to European Council conclusions on Permanent Structured Cooperation in the area of security and defence and on the implementation of the mutual defence clause.

Budgetary and financial architecture: Parliament believes that full transparency and democratic scrutiny require **separate budget lines** for each and every CSDP mission and operation, and for each and every EUSR, accompanied by streamlined but transparent procedures for the transfer of funds from one item to another if circumstances so require. The **Athena mechanism** for financing the common costs of EU-led military and defence operations does not provide a sufficient overview of all the financial implications of missions conducted under the CFSP, and Members call for a clear list of all expenditures.

They welcome the introduction of a new Partnership Instrument, as requested by Parliament, which brings important added value to the EU's CFSP by providing a financial framework for cooperation of the EU with third countries on objectives which arise from the Union's relationships but are outside of the scope of the Development Cooperation Instrument. Members feel that such an approach can be aided by the establishment of clear benchmarks, which should be monitored and evaluated by Parliament and they call for **benchmarking of the EU's foreign policy**, drawing upon existing strategic programming documents or strategic policy frameworks (such as those in place for the Horn of Africa or the Sahel).

Parliament welcomes the joint policy response of the Commission and the EEAS to events in the Southern Neighbourhood, and contends that the EEAS and the Commission should **explore the viability of the ENP's multilateral track to serve as a framework for organising political relations in the wider Europe**.

Strategic priorities: concentric circles of peace, security and socio-economic development: Members believe that the strategic interests, objectives and general guidelines to be pursued through the CFSP must be founded upon delivering peace, security and prosperity for the citizens of Europe and beyond, first of all in our neighbourhood, but also further afield, guided by the principles which inspired the creation of the EU itself.

They observe that there is **no clear formula for determining the Union's choice of a strategic partner** and that, when such choices are made, Parliament is neither informed nor consulted. Future decisions on strategic partners should carefully be framed in accordance with the foreign policy priorities of the Union,

and **due consideration should be given to ending partnerships that become obsolete or counter-productive**.

The report calls for **Parliament to be regularly informed** ahead of decisions on future partnerships, particularly where such partnerships receive financial support from the Union budget or entail a closer contractual relationship with the EU.

Members state also that it is important to focus the Union‘s limited resources on strategic priorities, **starting from the challenges closer to home**, particularly in the enlargement countries, the neighbourhood, and extending outwards in concentric circles. Respecting the commitments made in the framework of enlargement, and demonstrating a responsibility for our neighbourhood, will strengthen the credibility of the Union‘s global reach.

They go onto make a series of **specific observations** on: (i) the Western Balkans; (ii) Turkey; (iii) the Southern Neighbourhood and the Middle East including Iran, Libya and Syria; (iv) the Eastern Neighbourhood including Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, South Caucuses, and the Black Sea Strategy; (v) Russia; (vi) Central Asia and Afghanistan; (vii) the Americas; (viii) Africa; (ix) Asia, including China; (x) multilateral partners including the UN and NATO.

Lastly, the resolution makes specific observations on the **CFSP’s thematic priorities** including the Common Security and Defence Policy, the arms trade, conflict prevention and peace-building, and energy security.